(d) whether the international issues of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Iran were also discussed in the meetings; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) to (c) US Senator John F. Kerry visited India in January, 2006 and called on the Prime Minister on 11 January, 2006. Issues pertaining to Indo-US bilateral relations and international issues came up for discussion during the call. Prime Minister shared his perspective on the economic reform process and the challenges and opportunities of an accelerated growth rate by the Indian economy. Matters pertaining to energy security came up in this context. Senator Kerry expressed great confidence in the future of Indo-US relations. He said that the implementation of the 18 July, 2005 understanding would serve the interests of both the countries. Indo-US cooperation in the field of agriculture and infrastructure were also covered during the call.

(d) and (e) Prime Minister expressed our continuing concerns at cross-border terrorism by organizations operating out of Pakistan. Iran's nuclear programme and its consideration by the IAEA was also touched upon. Prime Minister reiterated India's position on this matter. Afghanistan and Nepal were not discussed during the meeting.

Joint declaration by India and Saudi Arabia

430. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Saudi Arabia have issued a joint declaration during the State Visit of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Prime Minister had held a wide range of discussions with King between specific ministers and officials;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) the outcome thereon;

(f) whether several Saudi companies are reportedly interested in investing in India;

(g) if so, the details of the areas identified so far; and

(h) the foreign exchange likely to be earned from these companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Yes. As per the Delhi Declaration signed by the PM and King Abdullah during the visit, both sides agreed to intensify exchanges of high level bilateral visits. They also agreed on the need to intensify and coordinate bilateral, regional and global cooperation to combat terrorism, and to expand and diversify mutual trade and investments. Both sides agreed to develop a strategic energy partnership based on complementarity and interdependence which would include reliable, stable and increased volume of crude oil supplies through long-term contracts as well as cooperative and joint ventures in the public and private sectors in the upstream and downstream oil and gas sectors in India and Saudi Arabia as well as third countries, Saudi investments in oil refining, marketing and storage in India and setting up of India-Saudi Ventures for gas-based fertilizer plants in Saudi Arabia. The two countries would work for closer cooperation in the field of information and communication technology, agriculture, bio-technology and non-conventional energy technologies as well as cooperation in human resource development, education and research. The two sides would work towards enhancing cooperation in the health sector, including health services, exchange of health personnel, health education and pharmaceuticals. The two sides would also cooperate in the field of science and technology, tourism, youth affairs and sports, agriculture research and education, technical education and training and other fields through signing of agreements and MoUs.

(c) and (d) Yes. The discussions covered bilateral and international issues of interest to both countries.

(e) The Delhi Declaration encapsulates the outcome of the visit, which will greatly strengthen bilateral relations.

(f) to (h) There are already around 49 Indo-Saudi joint ventures in India, in the fields of paper manufacture, chemicals, computer software,

granite processing, industrial products and machinery, cement, metallurgical industries, ceramics, food processing, leather goods, electrical equipments, service sector and textiles. Other areas identified are infratructure, upstream and downstream oil and gas sectors, oil refining, marketing and storage. Some more companies have shown interest in investing in India.

Visit of P.M. to Pakistan

431. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA. Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister has assured the President of Pakistan that he would visit Pakistan when they met in September, 2005 at the U.N.; and

(b) if so, the response of the President of Pakistan thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) During the meeting between Prime Minister and President Musharraf on 14 September 2005 in New York, President Musharraf invited Prime Minister to visit Pakistan. Prime Minister accepted the invitation of President Musharraf.

Stampede in Mecca

432. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government on the hindsight gained from the recent tragedy at Mecca killing more than 350 pilgrims in a stampede, has evolved any safety guidelines for future pilgrims from India;

(b) whether until the site of Jamarat in Mina is completely redesigned by Saudi Authorities, the Indian Government would try to restrict the number of pilgrims from India to manageable levels; and

(c) whether the all India Haj Committee would Set-up training camps for pilgrims at all important departure points to educate the pilgrims on safety measures?